

An American Soldier Meets His Waterloo.

BY EDGAR WHITE.

THE motor stopped in front of Jephthah's farmhouse in Owl Creek township, and a well-dressed young man got out. Seated in an old chair tilted against the weatherboarding was an old man smoking. This was Jephthah, the head of the house.

"Good-morning," saluted the well-dressed young man.

"Morning," returned Jephthah, without rising. It was a warm day, and he wore no coat.

"This Mr. Hathaway?"

"Yep."

"I'm Gaston Gabrialdi, representing the Grafton History Company of Chicago. We are now compiling a history of your county. I was told you had been a soldier in that terrible struggle between the States."

"You bet your boots, sonnie, I was there," answered the old man, with sudden interest.

"Good! Then you would make a splendid subject for our history. We desire to print biographical sketches of all the prominent citizens of this county, men who have really done something worth while—soldiers, statesmen, preachers and the like. Would you object to my taking a few notes of your war experience?" and the agent laid his straw hat on the porch, took a chair and pulled out his notebook.

Jephthah's eyes glittered. If there was anything on earth he liked to talk about it was the war. He went inside and brought out papers showing the campaigns he had been in, his honorable discharge and indorsements from his commander. The representative of the Grafton Company was mightily interested. He took many notes. Jephthah explained all about the big battles—Shiloh, Missionary Ridge, the Siege of Vicksburg, the March to the Sea. He pulled his chair up close to the sweating historian and bored into his breast with his long forefinger to emphasize his statements. The march, the charge, the fierce hand-to-hand encounter over the breastworks—Jephthah left nothing out. Never since the war had he run across a person who would listen to him while he told the whole story, and he couldn't let the opportunity go by. This stranger was a man of experience and intelligence. Anybody could see that. The reason the people about Owl Creek didn't appreciate the story of Jephthah's campaign was because it was beyond their grovelling minds. He understood it now. At no time did the visitor show the slightest sign of weariness or of being bored. Jephthah was tickled to death. But he finally ran down, and the caller wrote out a little blank and handed it to him. Jephthah put on his spectacles.

"What's this?" he asked.

"That is merely an order authorizing me to print your war history and for a copy of the book," replied the historian. "Sign on that space, please."

Jephthah picked up the pencil, and was about to do as directed when a tall woman appeared in the doorway. Her sleeves were rolled up, and she had evidently been engaged on some strenuous work. She must have weighed some 100 pounds more than the hero of Vicksburg.

"Jephthah," she demanded, "don't you sign no paper writin'!"

"Why, ma," said Jephthah in a conciliatory tone; "this don't hurt nothin'. It merely certifies that what I told him is facts."

The woman turned to the historian.

"If he signs that paper," she sharply asked, "how much does he agree to pay?"

"Why—er—this is merely a little matter of form—"

"How much does he agree to pay?" she insisted.

"Only \$15," replied the book man.

"Then he don't sign!" and with a significant look at her husband the woman went back to her work in the kitchen.

When she had disappeared, the historian again presented the little blank to Jephthah.

"Sign there," he said ingratiatingly.

"No—I—I—guess I'd better not," faltered the old man. "Ma seems to be agin' it."

"What!" exclaimed the maker of printed monuments, without trying to hide his contempt. "You a soldier, a man who charged on Vicksburg, who held the enemy at bay at Shiloh and who marched with Sherman to the sea, and you afraid?"

"I know, I know," returned Jephthah nervously, "but you see, when I done them things I had some friends along."

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